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American Missionary Association.

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# The Debt of Our Country

TO THE

## American Highlanders

During the War.

BY

SECRETARY C. J. RYDER.

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THE WAY THE DEBT WAS INCURRED.

GIFT OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.



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LINCOLN'S BIRTHPLACE.



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## The Debt of Our Country to the American Highlanders During the War.

SECRETARY C. J. RYDER.

In the following Paper, East Tennessee as a whole is spoken of as a Mountain State, being bounded and intersected by great mountain ranges, and all of its people are referred to as mountaineers or Highlanders. The creditable war record of which we speak belongs to the entire section. Strictly speaking, however, East Tennessee is an elevated valley, lying between two great mountain ranges. Within this region itself, the term mountaineers is applied to those who dwell in the distinctively mountainous districts of the section. And it is in these districts especially that the destitution exists, which our society is endeavoring to supply. The general culture and intelligence, and earnest religious activity of other districts of the section must not be lost sight of, and are most heartily attested by the writer.

Every new chapter that opens to us in the wonderful history of these mountain people adds to our interest in and our regard for them. Springing, as they do, from French Huguenots and Scotch Presbyterians, the heroic qualities of both have mingled in their blood. James Robertson, their Scotch Presbyterian ancestor, has been characterized as "Miles Standish without his Puritanism, John Brown without his fanaticism. He walked by faith and not by sight . . . undertaking and achieving projects which to cool reason, would seem absolutely chimerical." John Sevier, the Huguenot ancestor of these Highlanders, was the equal, if not the superior, of his Presbyterian comrade in the pioneer settlement of this mountain region. When he led the clans to meet the British at King's Mountain, September 25, 1780, after Parson Doak had committed them to the divine protection, his brave followers rode after him, making the woods on the old mountains echo with their peculiar but reverent battle cry, "With the sword of the Lord and our Gideon." And when, after the battle, these same men shouted themselves hoarse over "Nolichucky Jack," they rejoiced in a victory that turned the tide of battle in favor of the colonies. "The British power in the colonies was broken at King's Mountain." This fact Jefferson recognized in the following words: "That glorious victory was the joyous annunciation of that turn in the tide of success which terminated the revolutionary war with the seal of independence."

The debt which our country owed these mountain warriors for their heroic service during the revolution, was recognized both by

word and deed. A sword was presented to John Sevier, which bore upon its blade the following :

"STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
TO  
COLONEL JOHN SEVIER."

On the other side is :

"KING'S MOUNTAIN,  
7th October, 1780."

The General Assembly of North Carolina passed a vote of thanks. Such were the achievements of these heroic mountain people, when the colonies were fighting for independence. There was the same unswerving devotion to their country, on the part of the children of these revolutionary heroes, during the war of the rebellion. The object of this paper is to trace their loyal heroism, and to bring more vividly before us the tremendous debt we owe these brave Highlanders for their unswerving devotion to our flag and country during the dark days from 1860 to 1865. Their loyalty involved supreme sacrifice, and they knew it. It meant the destruction of their crops; the burning of their homes; cruel outrages heaped upon their women and children, and often their own execution as outlaws! We who lived in the favored North knew scarcely anything of sacrifice for country in comparison with what these mountain people endured. That I may not seem to exaggerate the terrible conditions under which they were brought by their loyalty, I quote from an order of the rebel government, which was directed especially against these loyal Highlanders. It reads as follows :

"WAR DEPARTMENT,  
RICHMOND, November 25, 1861.

*"Colonel W. B. Wood:*

SIR—Your report of the 20th inst. is received, and I now proceed to give you the desired instruction in relation to the prisoners of war taken by you among the traitors of East Tennessee.

1. All such as can be identified as having been engaged in bridge-burning are to be tried summarily by drum-head court-martial, and, if found guilty, executed on the spot by hanging. It would be well to leave their bodies hanging in the vicinity of the burned bridges."

This order, horrible in its cruelty, contains two other articles bearing upon the same matter, and closes as follows : " Your vigilant execution of these orders is earnestly urged by the government.

Your obedient servant,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of War."

Here were men whose only crime was loyalty to their country; who had burned the bridge across their mountain stream to protect

their homes from destruction, and their families from outrage, from the roving band of rebel cavalry. Those men were consigned to a mock trial and immediate hanging, and to have their bodies exposed for days, a sickening horror before the eyes of their families! It hardly seems credible that any government that ever existed could have issued such an order as this, intending it should be obeyed. But painful facts proved that this order was issued by the rebel government to be obeyed, and it was obeyed in numerous instances. At Greenville two men, Mensie and Fry, were hanged with no legal trial, and "their bodies, instead of being quartered and distributed abroad, after an old English custom, were left suspended for four days near the railroad track."

On another occasion two men by the name of Harmon, father and son, were hanged for bridge-burning. The rebel authorities provided only one gallows, and compelled the father to stand by and watch his son pass through the sickening struggle of strangulation, and then march upon the same scaffold and meet his own awful doom.

These facts show what the terrible price of loyalty was which these Highlanders paid. And the facts quoted above, revolting and sickening as they are, are only typical, for pages and volumes might be filled with similar incidents of cruel outrage and unswerving loyalty which these Southern mountains witnessed. I repeat that we in the North scarcely knew the meaning of sacrifice for our country in comparison with the bitter experience of these mountain people. And yet they never wavered in their loyalty to the government. Another writes of them as follows: "In numerous instances starvation, like a gaunt wolf, threatened the door, and the hearts of many were sickened by the hope of succor long deferred, but the fire of devotion to the Union still lived and glowed within them, strong and bright, until the end came." The author of the volume entitled, "Loyal Mountaineers of East Tennessee," himself a native of East Tennessee, has the truth on his side when he writes as follows: "It is certain that the steadfast attachment of East Tennessee to the Union, and the efficient aid it gave to its preservation, formed an important factor in the war, and contributed in no small degree to its final result."

Having then reviewed the painful circumstances into which these Highlanders were being brought by their loyalty, and the large element their heroic services were in securing the final victory, let us analyze the debt we owe them for their unswerving patriotism, and discover some of the items that it includes. Let us take, first, the general facts. The mountain States of West Virginia, Kentucky and East Tennessee never seceded. In February, 1861, the vote was taken in Tennessee, and by a splendid majority of 60,000 votes, that State emphasized her loyalty to the Union. This tremendous majority was



largely piled up in the mountain counties. Even after this decided repudiation of secession had been given by the people, the Rebel State Government entered into a military league with the Southern Confederacy. But even then East Tennessee remained loyal, and asked to be set aside as a separate commonwealth, as West Virginia afterward was.

Passing up into Kentucky, we find much the same line of cleavage between treason and patriotism. The Blue Grass region was filled with traitors, while the mountains echoed to the tramp of the gathering clan of loyal Highlanders. The situation of the two camps was significant. The rebels, under Humphrey Marshall, had their recruiting camp in Owen County, within a few miles of the State Capitol, while the Unionists gathered at Camp Dick Robinson, in Gerrard County, at the edge of the mountain region. The State Guards, organized and armed for the defense of the loyal government, composed largely of the aristocratic Blue Grass men, proved disloyal, and deserted the flag almost to a man. But the Home Guards, recruited quite largely from the plain mountain people, met Zollicoffer, as he invaded the State through Cumberland Gap, bravely defended their State, marching under the flag of their country. The first battle was fought not far from Barbourville, among the mountains of Knox County. We learn, therefore, so far as we have the history of the united action of these Highlanders in the several States, that they were always, almost unanimously, loyal to the country. The same fact is evident in the number of troops that were recruited for the Union army.

Tennessee furnished 31,000 loyal white troops, and 30,000 of these came from the loyal Highlanders of East Tennessee. Only 1,000 from all the rest of the State! The mountain State of West Virginia furnished 32,000 loyal soldiers, while her population was only 393,000. Kentucky furnished 79,000 soldiers for the loyal army. N. S. Shaler, writing in the Commonwealth Series, says of Kentucky: "Out of a total enrollment of 133,493 of military age . . . Kentucky furnished and mustered into the United States service 76,335 men." And he adds that, "in addition to this, 7,000 men enlisted who were not mustered in, and 10,000 men were in the loyal Home Guards." "Nearly one-tenth of the total population of the State" in the loyal army! And these men came very largely from the mountain region. A mountain man once said to me:

"Whar was you raised?"

"In Ohio," I replied.

"I reckon you had the draft in Ohio, didn't you?"

"Yes," I replied, "we did."

"We didn't have any draft down here in the mountains."

"That's strange," I replied. "Why didn't you have a draft?"



"Because we enlisted so fast in the Union army they couldn't catch us with the draft," replied the loyal Highlander, proudly

And this is literally true. I quote again from the authority given above: "Kentucky's quota of troops was always full, and despite the fact that over 40,000 of her young men did go into the rebellion, she raised all the men that fell to her share, almost without bounties and practically without a draft, a patriotic record that was not exceeded, if it was equaled, by any State in the Union." The mountain States of Kentucky, West Virginia and East Tennessee furnished 140,000 troops to the Union army, whereas New Hampshire, Vermont and Connecticut furnished only 116,000, 24,000 less than these Southern Highlanders. And the enrollment of loyal troops among the mountaineers was greater than the total enrollment of Union troops from Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Minnesota, Dakota, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, by 7,000. Who can blame the loyal Highlanders that they cherish considerable pride in their war history? Every effort was made by the rebel authorities to entice them into secession. The brilliant Confederate General, Albert Sidney Johnston, himself a Kentuckian, was sent among them with an army, with the impression that State pride would seduce them. But neither by eloquence of tongue nor argument of cannon could this son of Kentucky persuade these heroic patriots to betray their country, or to desert her flag!

In this debt that our country owes to these loyal Highlanders for their united acts of loyalty, we have discovered the following items:

1. Overwhelming Union majorities in popular votes.
2. Enthusiastic loyal conventions after other Southern States, and even parts of their own States, had seceded.
3. Obstinate resistance against the rebel force by loyal Highland clans.
4. One hundred and fifty thousand volunteers in the Union army, enlisting without bounty and without draft?

This surely were enough to rouse every patriot, not to say Christian, to pay this enormous debt which we owe these mountain people for their heroic service during the war. But there are other items in this bill which we need to review. Their private sacrifices during these days of blood and cruelty were heroic and pathetic.

Take a few incidents which illustrate this inner and personal history, that we may realize how noble and yet how sad their devotion was.

"If you can be merry then, I'll say,  
A man may weep upon his wedding day."

Here are some facts recorded in the diary of brave old Parson Brownlow when he was a prisoner in the jail at Knoxville.

Brownlow writes: "Dec. 7 thirty-one other prisoners arrived from Cocke, Greene and Jefferson counties. They bring us tales of woe from their respective counties as to the treatment of Union men and their families by the . . . cavalry in rebellion."

"Dec. 9. . . . twenty-eight are in from Jefferson and Cocke counties."

Fifteen arrived in the prison the next day but one, and on the 12th of December fifteen were sent to Tuscaloosa, Fla. Of these Brownlow says: "They had no trial, but were sent upon their admission that they had been found in arms as Union men, preparing to defend themselves against the assaults and robberies of the so-called Confederate cavalry. Poor fellows! They hated to go." All the counties from which Union prisoners came were mountain counties.

Take the following three instances given by Parson Brownlow, under date of Dec. 15, 16 and 17, which are taken from many similar instances, as illustrating the horrible brutality of the Confederate authorities toward these mountain people, and their unswerving patriotism. Brownlow writes: "Levy Trewliitt, an able lawyer, but an old man, will never get back. His sons came to see him, but were denied the privilege. Dr. Hunt, from the same county of Bradley, has also gone (to Tuscaloosa). His wife came sixty miles to see him and came to the jail door, but was refused admittance."

"Dec. 16. They brought in Dr. Wells and Col. Morris, of Knox County, two clever men and good citizens. Their offense is that they are Union men, first, and next they voted and electioneered as old Whigs . . . years ago."

"Dec. 17. Brought in a Union man from Campbell County to-day, leaving behind six small children, and their mother dead. This man's offense is holding out for the Union. To-night two brothers named Walker came in from Hawkins County, charged with having 'talked Union talk.'" Col. N. G. Taylor, who collected material for an unwritten history of East Tennessee, writes to a friend, under date of Feb. 22, 1866, as follows: "I was at some pains to gather up from different counties the facts . . . and the result showed an aggregate of from 2,500 to 3,000 non-combatants massacred for their Union sentiments." He gives the counties in which these outrages were perpetrated. In every case they were mountain counties, and those who died rather than surrender their loyalty to the Union were Highlanders. The only crime of which these men were guilty was that of loyalty. Judge C. W. Hall, of Rogersville, Tenn., in a volume entitled "Threescore Years and Ten," by a lawyer (Cin., 1884), after repeating incidents of outrage against Union men of which he knew, adds: "These outrages were not confined to the more populous portions of the counties, but were often perpetrated in the hills and hollows, and usually upon men reputable at home, but bold enough to confess their loyalty. Indeed, it was a rare thing to find a man who had a bad character before the war advocating the Union cause." But these Highlanders were loyal despite these bitter persecutions. Were it not abundantly proven by history, we could scarcely believe that such methods were employed to overcome their unswerving patriotism. Dr. Humes, in the "Loyal Mountaineers," has preserved the following advertisement, which originally appeared in the *Memphis Appeal*:

### "BLOODHOUNDS WANTED !

"We, the undersigned, will pay \$5 per pair for fifty pairs of well-bred hounds, and \$50 for one pair of thoroughbred bloodhounds that will take the track of a man. The purpose for which these dogs are wanted is to chase the infernal, cowardly, bushwhackers of East Tennessee and Kentucky. \* \* \*

"F. N. MCNAIRY,  
"H. H. HARRIS.

"Camp, Crinfuth, Campbell Co.,  
Tenn., Nov. 16, (1861)."

But bloodhounds were as ineffective as bullets or hangmen's ropes, for turning these brave men away from loyalty to their country. And the loyalty of the mountain women was as steadfast as that of the men. When General Blair marched to the relief of Burnside at Knoxville, women "crowded the line of his forced march to welcome the sight of our armies; to wave the flags which in evil days they had hidden in the secret recesses of their homes, even as they kept the love of the Union in their hearts; to bring the last piece of bacon and the last handful of meal to feed the advancing soldiers of the Union cause."

There were deeds of valor by mountain heroines that shine as brightly as those of a Molly Stark or Barbara Frietchie. Mrs. Edwards, of Campbell County, marched 150 miles in inclement weather, over the mountains, to carry information to Union troops. Immediately upon arriving at home, having received some valuable information, she pushed her way through the rain, on horseback, alone, and saved the Union General Spears from capture! General Spears was so impressed by her daring and patriotic exploit that he recommended that the Federal Government should reward her for it, but no reward has ever been paid. Again and again this same woman took perilous journeys to carry information to Union officers. Nor was she the only heroine among the mountain women. During the siege of Knoxville, General Grant desired to send an important message to General Burnside. "So overrun was the territory between Chattanooga and Knoxville by Confederate troops that it could only be delivered, if at all, with great difficulty and hazard. At length, Miss Mary Love, of Kingston, Tenn., agreed to take the message through the Confederate lines." She got as far as Louisville, Tenn., but could get no farther. There she found but one person who was willing to run the risk of taking the message through the lines, and he was a boy only thirteen years of age, John T. Brown. He carried the dispatch safely through the lines and delivered it to General Burnside. What a shame it is to us as a nation that the historian who records the fact is obliged to add: "He has never received from the government any acknowledgment of his brave and patriotic service!"

At the great mass meeting held in Faneuil Hall, Boston, February 10, 1864, which had gathered to hear the Rev. N. G. Taylor, who came from the loyal Highlanders to tell their story to the loyal North, the Hon. Edward Everett, who presided, used the following eloquent language: "Mr. Taylor represents the Union men in the Southern mountains who have stood at the post of danger, on whom

the storm of war just broke, and on whom from that day to this it has beat with wildest fury. At this distance from the seat of war we hear only the far-off roar of the tempest, but all its waves and billows have gone over that devoted region." "Overrun it may be by the armed forces of the rebellion, but all its sympathies and attachments are with the loyal States." "A portion of the same grand chain of mountain and valley is as loyal as Massachusetts." Mr. Everett closed this wonderful address with these words, and they ought to ring in our ears and stir our hearts to day in behalf of these noble mountain men and women. He said: "If the Union means anything, it means not merely political connection and commercial intercourse, but to bear each other's burdens and to share each other's sacrifices; it means active sympathy and efficient aid." These mountain people were in danger of starving physically when Mr. Everett made this appeal to the sympathy and aid of the loyal North in their behalf. But to-day they are in danger of starving intellectually and spiritually; and shall we fail to respond when sympathy and aid are demanded to meet their greater need?

These items of our country's debt to these patriotic Highlanders were written in their valiant deeds and heroic deaths. Their fertile coves were swept with firebrand and sword. Their mountain streams ran red with the blood of their murdered kindred. Death looked each man and woman full in the face for four long years. And yet they stood heart to heart and shoulder to shoulder with the loyal North, and never swerved from their unflinching devotion to our common country!

In addition to the privation and suffering endured by these patriotic Highlanders we must remember that they gave to us our noble martyred President, Abraham Lincoln, who was born at Hodgenville, in Le Rue County, Kentucky, on the western edge of this mountain region. "The short and simple annals of the poor" was Abraham Lincoln's characterization of his own early life. The cabin in which he was born and in which he passed the early years of his childhood can be duplicated in the mountain region to-day. And men of just such manly and heroic mold as Abraham Lincoln come from these same mountain cabins. It adds the element of hope and increases our obligation to these splendid mountaineers when we remember that he who did more to save our nation than any other man and sealed his service by his own life came from these humble but heroic people. Abraham Lincoln is a tremendous item in the debt that our country owes to these American Highlanders.

And now comes our opportunity to pay this debt. Let us build school-houses and churches where their better cabins have risen from the ashes of the past. Let us invade their coves and press up their mountain sides with an army of Christian teachers and preachers, until the grey old forests that echoed with the shout of these loyal Highlanders shall again echo with the sound of church bell and school bell, and they who took from us the larger sacrifice of the war shall find that we are ready to share with them the blessed fruits of peace. So, and so only, can we pay the debt we owe as Christian patriots to these patriotic Highlanders of our Southern mountains.



THE WAY THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION  
IS PAYING THE DEBT—BY PLANTING



MOUNTAIN CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS.

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